

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 12035 031805Z

44

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 CIEP-03 DRC-01 /112 W

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P R 031637Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 620

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

:USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2707

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 12035

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PINT LE

SUBJECT: SALAM ASKED TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: BEIRUT 11899

1. AS ANTICIPATED, SAEB SALAM HAS ACCEPTED SUMMONS FROM PRES. FRANGIE TO FORM NEW CABINET (FBIS BE 031113). SALAM IMMEDIATELY ARRANGED FOR PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIONS OVER NEXT TWO DAYS FOR THAT PURPOSE. WE RELIABLY INFORMED HE PLANS ANNOUNCE DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS BY SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5.

2. KAMAL JUMBLATT, WHO APPARENTLY MAINTAINED HIS OBJECTIONS TO SALAM UNTIL BITTER END, SEEMS DESTINED TO STAND IN OPPOSITION TO NEW GOVT. IN LEBANESE CONTEXT, HOWEVER, IT WOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE THAT JUMBLATT MIGHT PRIVATELY HAVE BEEN RECONCILED BY INDUCEMENTS OFFERED BY FRANGIE, BUT RUMORS SUGGESTING THIS ARE SCARCE. IN ANY EVENT, INFORMED SOURCE CLOSE TO SALAM TOLD ME AFTERNOON OCT 3 THAT THINGS ARE "GOING WELL" AND THAT SALAM SUPPORTERS NOT PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT JUMBLATT. AN-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 12035 031805Z

OTHER REPORT (UNCONFIRMED) IS THAT JUMBLATT MET WITH RASHID

KARAME MORNING OCT 3 TO TRY AND WOO LATTER AWAY FROM HIS ALLIANCE WITH SALAM. KARAME REPORTEDLY REBUFFED APPROACH AS "TOO LATE" AND SAID HIS ALLIANCE WITH SALAM AND EDDE STANDS (FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST). CIRCLES CLOSE TO SALAM ALSO BELIEVE THAT THEY FACE NO REAL DIFFICULTY FROM SHIITE IMAM MUSA AS SADR AND IT MAY BE THAT SALAM AND IMAM HAVE COME TO SOME KIND OF UNDERSTANDING IN THEIR MEETINGS OVER PAST FEW DAYS.

3. SALAM IS SAID TO BE FOCUSSED ON CABINET THAT WILL INCLUDE BOTH PARLIAMENTARY AND NON-PARLIAMENTARY FIGURES. DEPT WILL RECALL THAT WHEN SALAM FORMED HIS EARLIER GOVT. FOLLOWING FRANGIE'S ELECTION IN 1970, HE CHOSE MAINLY YOUNGER "TECHNOCRATS". ALTHOUGH THAT EXPERIMENT DID NOT PROVE PARTICULARLY LASTING OR HAPPY FOR VARIETY OF REASONS, SALAM MAY BE PREPARED TO TRY IT AGAIN ON SOMEWHAT REDUCED BASIS THIS TIME. AMONG NAMES ALREADY SAID TO BE ON SALAM'S LIST OF "POTENTIALS" THOSE OF ABDULLAH RASI (FRANGIE'S SON-IN-LAW WHO COULD REPLACE TONY FRANGIE AS "FAMILY MINISTER") AND FORMER FONMIN KHALIL ABUHAMAD (WHO PRIVATELY HAS TOLD ME HE NOT RPT NOT INTEREST IN RETURNING AS FONMIN).

4. COMMENT: WHILE MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN TO BE ANSWERED OVER NEXT SEVERAL DAYS, SALAM AND HIS CONFIDANTS APPEAR PLEASED TO HAVE GAINED PRESIDENTIAL NOD AND CONFIDENT THEY CAN RAPIDLY ASSEMBLE ACCEPTABLE CABINET. SALAM HAS APPEALED TO HIS SUPPORTERS TO REFRAIN FROM "FIRING IN AIR" IN THEIR JUBILATION OVER HIS NOMINATION, THREATENING TO PUNISH VIOLATORS. WITH BACKING OF FRANGIE AND PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT OF BLOCS LED BY, INTER ALIA, CHAMOUN, EDDE, GEMAYEL AND HIS FORMER SUNNI RIVAL KARAME, SAEB BEY APPARENTLY BELIEVES HE CAN QUICKLY TAKE REINS OF GOVT. IN HAND.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CollinP0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BEIRUT12035
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740280-0360
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741077/aaaacntm.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BEIRUT 11899
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CollinP0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 JUL 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <11 MAR 2003 by CollinP0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SALAM ASKED TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LE, (SALAM, SAEB), (JUMBLATT, KAMAL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005